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House passes Sen. Patterson's bill to protect cell-phone records

LANSING—A bill that would protect consumers against the fraudulent use of their cell-phone records unanimously passed the House today. Senate Bill 1202 would prohibit anyone from knowingly obtaining or selling (or attempting to do so) a confidential telephone record without the prior authorization of the customer, said the bill's sponsor, Sen. Bruce Patterson, chairman of the Senate Technology & Energy Committee.

"Individuals have the right to have their identity protected," said Patterson, 7th District. "Other types of personal information have been safeguarded; importantly, this legislation brings Michigan's identity-theft protection up to date by also protecting consumers' telephone records."

Patterson said that just a few personal facts about an individual can allow someone to pose as that person and obtain his phone records by fraud. Phone-service providers try to keep these records confidential, but con artists have found ways to deceive them and obtain personal information.

Operations claiming to offer private cell-phone records do not appear affiliated with any major cellular telephone or VOIP (voice over Internet protocol) service providers. Reports suggest that in some cases, telephone company insiders secretly sold customers' phone-call lists to online brokers, despite strict telephone-company rules against such deals. Sites offering these services sell this information for about \$90.

Patterson has previously guided legislation to combat spyware and SPAM through the Senate Technology & Energy Committee.

"Identity theft has proven to be a crime that continues to find new ways to strike," said Patterson. "I have acted and will continue to act to prevent it in any form it presents itself."

Patterson, who was the first Michigan legislator to call for such a law back in January, said there are several outfits on the Internet that claim to provide personal cell-phone information.

"I am pleased that I received bipartisan support as soon as my bill was offered," said Patterson. "Everyone has understood the urgency of the situation. I expect the Senate to concur quickly with the minor change made in the House so we can send this on to the governor."

After concurrence by the Senate, SB 1202 will be sent to the governor for her signature.

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